

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 PA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 SOE-02 AID-05
CEA-01 COME-00 EB-08 DOE-15 H-01 INR-10 INT-05
L-03 OMB-01 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 STR-07 TRSE-00
ACDA-12 /111 W
-----042935 260832Z /10

O 260818Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9098

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TECH, ENRG, JA
SUBJECT: SOLAR ENERGY POLICY REVIEW

REF: STATE 145840

1. SOME EMBASSY STAFF MEMBERS HAVE HAD EXPERIENCE IN TALKING ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OF SOLAR ENERGY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THOSE COUNTRIES. EMBASSY STAFF ARE DIRECTLY CONCERNED WITH SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN. WITH THIS BACKGROUND WE OFFER COMMENTS BELOW FOR DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION IN PREPARING FOR SOLAR ENERGY POLICY REVIEW.

2. REFTEL STATES THAT AN INTERNATIONAL PANEL WILL PERFORM THE SPECIFIC ANALYSES REQUIRED. IF "INTERNATIONAL" MEANS THAT PARTICIPATION WILL BE SOLICITED FROM OTHER NATIONS IN THE STUDY, THEN WE SUGGEST THAT EVALUATION OF MARKET POTENTIAL FOR U.S. MANUFACTURERS AND EXTENT OF FOREIGN COMPETITION NOT BE PART OF BASIC STUDY BUT BE CONDUCTED AS SEPARATE STUDY EITHER IN PARALLEL OR AFTER RESULTS OF OTHER ANALYSES ARE ON HAND. IMPACT OF
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COMPLETED SOLAR ENERGY POLICY REVIEW ON OTHER NATIONS, WHEN OR IF IT IS MADE AVAILABLE TO THEM, WILL BE LOST OR MAY ACTUALLY BE NEGATIVE IF IT IS LEARNED THAT ONE OF PRIMARY REASONS FOR CONDUCTING STUDY IS TO EXPAND U.S. MARKETS.

3. WE HAVE BEEN UNDER IMPRESSION FOR SOME TIME THAT

LARGE-SCALE APPLICATIONS OF SOLAR ENERGY IN JAPAN ARE NOT AS ATTRACTIVE AS THEY WOULD BE IN U.S., FOR EXAMPLE, BECAUSE OF CLIMATIC CONDITIONS AND RELATIVE LACK OF OPEN SPACE. WE BELIEVE THAT JAPANESE DEVELOPMENT OF SOLAR ENERGY TECHNOLOGY IS AIMED TO A DEGREE (MAYBE LARGELY) AT CAPTURING FOREIGN MARKETS FOR SOLAR ENERGY DEVICES. IN VIEW OF JAPANESE ABILITY TO ADAPT MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS TO NEEDS OF OTHER COUNTRIES, JAPAN COULD BE A FORMIDABLE COMPETITOR TO U.S. IN THESE MARKETS. A.D. LITTLE HAS MADE PROPRIETARY MARKET SURVEY OF SOLAR ENERGY MARKET IN JAPAN WHICH IS EXTREMELY DETAILED AND THOROUGH. PERHAPS ADL WOULD BE WILLING TO PROVIDE SUMMARY OR ACTUAL REPORT TO USG ON CONFIDENTIAL BASIS. WE DOUBT THAT IT WOULD RELEASE REPORT TO U.S. COMPANIES WHO HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN STUDY.

4. ONE OF BIGGEST DIFFICULTIES IN DETERMINING APPLICABILITY OF SOLAR ENERGY TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IS BASIC LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF TOTAL ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE IN THESE COUNTRIES AND OF PROJECTION OF GROWTH IN ENERGY DEMAND. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS LITTLE DATA AVAILABLE ON AVERAGE INSOLATION RATES BY REGION WITHIN THESE COUNTRIES. SUCH DATA ARE BADLY NEEDED TO PROPERLY SIZE SOLAR COLLECTORS AND ENERGY STORAGE DEVICES. UNLESS MAJOR EFFORT IS MADE TO EXAMINE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, CUSTOMS, AND ENERGY SUPPLY/DEMAND RELATIONSHIPS
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COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY OR EVEN SUB-REGION BY SUB-REGION IN THE CASE OF LARGE COUNTRIES, ANY PROJECTIONS OF POTENTIAL SOLAR ENERGY USE MAY BE HIGHLY INACCURATE. THIS IN TURN MEANS THAT SUBSTANTIAL COLLABORATION MAY BE REQUIRED FROM KNOWLEDGEABLE PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRIES STUDIED.

5. TO DEMONSTRATE THE TYPE OF PROBLEM INVOLVED IN EVALUATING SOLAR ENERGY POTENTIAL FOR AN LDC, WE RECOMMEND THAT DEPT. OFFICIALS READ ARTICLE IN MAY 1978 ISSUE OF BULLETIN OF THE ATOMIC SCIENTISTS BY PROF. A.K.N. REDDY, INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, BANGALORE. TITLE OF ARTICLE IS, "ENERGY OPTIONS FOR THE THIRD WORLD." IT IS THE BEST WE HAVE SEEN IN DEMONSTRATING THAT THE PROBLEM OF ADAPTATION TO NEW ENERGY SOURCES BY POOR LDC'S SHOULD BE WORKED FROM THE INSIDE OUT, NOT NECESSARILY THE OTHER WAY. MANSFIELD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ENERGY, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TOKYO11582
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780264-0453
Format: TEL
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780618/aaaaapvu.tel
Line Count: 110
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a235667f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 145840
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2201581
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOLAR ENERGY POLICY REVIEW
TAGS: TECH, ENRG, JA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a235667f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014